













# TOWER OF IVORY

BY  
ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

WITH A FOREWORD BY  
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## FOREWORD

*On the departure for France of my friend and former pupil, Mr. MacLeish, in the Federal service, it became my privilege to prepare his manuscript for publication and see it through the press. In this editorial capacity I have been beset by but one misgiving—the apprehension, namely, that the casual reader might, unless forewarned, read these poems for their lilt and melodic charm alone without ever penetrating beneath their surface. Since this would be a grievous vexation to Mr. MacLeish himself, for in his eyes lyrical tunefulness is far less important than vital underlying idea, I venture to insist upon the intellectual content of his work and to suggest the fundamental conviction animating most of it. Under various symbols he is passionately appealing for the intuitive apprehension of reality as against the baffling limitations of the reason and the senses—as, for example, in “Our Lady of Troy,” where the tragedy of Faustus lies in his purblind*

*reliance upon positivist science to the exclusion of the visioned aesthetic gospel proclaimed by Helen. There are, of course, other ideas in the volume, such as the subtle qualitative definition in "An Eternity," the curious problem of remembered inspiration in "Echo," and the different reactions in the war poems; but on the whole his title, "Tower of Ivory," adequately represents his predominating idealistic conception, that against all the assaults of arid rationalism and crass materialism, against all the riddles of endless speculation and brutal experience, there is an impregnable tower of refuge into which man may enter, in the spirit, and find there the true values and eternal verities which alone can make him victorious over the world. So much for the content of his work: his command of the beauty of poetic form may be left to speak for itself.*

*Lawrence Mason.*

*September 12, 1917.  
New Haven, Conn.*

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# TOWER OF IVORY





## OUR LADY OF TROY

[In the Dutch translation of the original Faust Legend, published by Spiess in Frankfurt in 1587, it is established that the "notorious sorcerer and black-artist" was seized by the Devil at midnight on the 23d of October, 1538, while sitting with a company of students in the tavern of Rimlich near Wittenberg.]

[Scene: The great room of an ancient tavern in the village of Rimlich. Stubs of candles guttering in their sconces on the back wall, and a smouldering fire in a wide chimney-place give an uncertain light. Three students from Wittenberg sit together at one end of the oak table. They are singing in high good humor. At the other end of the board sits Faustus, wrapped in a great cloak still wet from the storm that beats at door and window, and beside him is his servant, Wagner. A strange horologe on the back wall points to half-past eleven.]

Students [singing]

In dulce jubilo—  
Drink and be merry, oh!  
Wine is old laughter.  
Whoso will rise again  
Sickens and dies again  
Here and hereafter.  
No immortality  
But this reality  
Lasts a day longer.  
Drink and be merry, oh!  
In dulce jubilo—  
Death is the stronger.

Christopher

Better lads! Some'at better,—you there,  
Fritz,  
Your diatonics would make Ockenheim  
Writhe i' the worms. You should have Ah  
—not *Ah*—  
On that first jubilo—o—o.

Matthiolus

Hush you! We stopped the stranger in his  
tale.

He'd glimpsed at Eden from the Caucasus  
When you two started Dulce—'tis a tune  
I can't forbear the taste of—jubilo!  
But come, good Doctor; here's to Eden.  
Health!  
Saw you the serpent?

Faustus

I saw naught to fear.  
There's naught to fear from Heaven  
through to Hell;  
Nothing that mind can't solve. Mind is the  
king—

Fritz

And queen too—ah the gold and scarlet  
minds  
O' Lasses! Hey lads? And the golden lips  
Of many golden tunes,—how goes the  
song?—  
“Bursts the red grape, sweet oh sweet!  
Lips o' maid are sweeter.”

Christopher

Be still, Fritz! That's an evil tune,—thin  
tune,

No true antiphony. Grant him a space  
To save himself from craggy Caucasus  
Before you make a rainbow of a maid.

Faustus

Ah, you've the true mathesis, sir, the pure  
Sciential. Step by step your logic mind  
Works to the core of things; seeks me out  
first

An elixation, seething of the thoughts  
Hot in the stew-pan of the brain before  
Elixir's had. All true philosophy  
Progresses thus; expulsion here, and here  
Assation till the pure digested truth  
Turns into fire,—else there is myopsy  
And phantoms seen.

Christopher

The true mathesis, Fritz!  
You mark? I'm hailed philosopher.

Fritz

His eye  
Reflects a certain doubt upon his tongue.

## Faustus

The Epicuran, Leo Decimus,  
Had such a mind. He questioned how the  
soul

Which was not, was, and then was not again  
Should be immortal; so he summoned him  
His doctors and his clerks and bade them  
speak

Backward and forward, he digesting all  
Their doctrines and logomachies and rules,  
Believing here, denying there, and ending  
With Gallus': "*Redit in nihilum quod ante  
Nihil.*" And judged uncommon well. The  
soul,

Or, as your Paracelsus saith, the four  
Seed covers of the spirit—what are these  
But thought ill-elixate, a crapula  
Troubling the brain?

But I digress somewhat  
From Eden; so did mother Eve, but she  
Was woman. Man must ever set his face  
Toward the sunset, make his pilgrim way  
Into the West. There is no pause for dream  
With all the shining kingdom of the mind,  
All truth, all science, all the stars to reap,  
And Time forever clattering at heel

Like bones the children tie to yelping curs.  
So then, our true mathesis, next and next!  
From Caucasus I wandered back to Rome—  
Three days in the Vatican invisible,  
Ate with the Pope, snatched from his holy  
dish  
Beneath his holy fingers, stole his cup  
Out from his stretching hand; oh saints! to  
see  
Him grasp for wine to cool a burning tongue,  
Blistered with meat, and miss the cup and  
stare  
Mouth open at its sudden flight toward  
Heaven,  
While all the table thumbed their beads and  
gasped  
*Nunc dimittis*, and crossed at brow and chin.  
They rang the bells three hours to flout the  
devil.

### Christopher

They blamed the devil, then.—It's so at  
Rome:  
Lack food, lack gold, lack kisses, blame the  
devil!

## Matthiolus

The fools! I follow Scaliger, who says  
The devil's dead. Old Trismegistus' self  
Ne'er saw him—only hoofspore in the sand,  
His ass no doubt. And as for your nine  
orders,

Beelzebub, Apollo Pythius,  
Belial, Asmodaeus, and Abaddon,  
Diabalos, Meresin, Satan, Mammon,—  
Your hierarchy of sprites terrestrial,  
Sublunary, aquatic,—earth and sky,  
I'll none of 'em.

## Faustus

Your sciolist in truth!  
Your true agnostic! "Unseen, Unknown"  
Is sacred text for schoolmen. I myself  
With deepest cabalistic—metaphysic—  
What have I found o' midnights in the flame?  
No satyrs, cacodemons, foliots,  
No Bel of Babylon, no Greek Astartes,  
No fairies such as Paracelsus saw,  
Nor naiads that Olaus Magnus met  
And feasted with on some moon-stricken  
shore,

Nothing of these,—but one who is sheer  
mind,  
The globing crystal of the world wherein  
All knowledge gleams and darkens, one who  
knows  
The eagle's way in air, the snake's on sand,  
And man's way who is eagle both and worm.

Matthiolus

A marvel truly—was't Vergilius  
The sorcerer of Rome?

Christopher

Was't Aristotle?

Wagner

I pray you, master, hearken how the storm  
Breathes in the hush, and troubled thunder  
crawls  
Along the rim of earth. 'Tis almost time,  
'Tis almost midnight. Harken!

Faustus

So, my boy!  
'Twill be at midnight. Naming of a name  
Ne'er brought Shekinah sooner to the ark.



Wagner [hurriedly]

You told them, master, how the bells were  
rung

At Rome to flout the devil. Tell them now  
How you became Mahomet.

Faustus

Ha! Mahomet!

To see me clad in linen setting forth  
A crocodility of hours and houris!  
The sultan prayed to me; but Moslem faith  
Is no theology for scholars. Phew!  
I'll warrant there were heretics enough  
Fouling the sacred porches where I taught.

Wagner

And then the serpent!

Faustus

Ah, the golden snake  
I turned to gold.

Wagner

The burning fiery ice!

Faustus

Here, lad, you're puffing out the tale. 'Twas  
fire

I froze to ice—the crystal phlogiston.—

[To Matthiolus]

You, sir, will understand. But ice on fire!  
Not Vergil's self had science to do that.

Wagner

And how you made king Alexander walk!

Faustus

Hush! Hush! The emperor was not o'er-  
pleased

And all of Innsbruck chattered in its bed.

Fritz

King Alexander! Nay, we heard the tale.—  
A certain Faustus, a philosopher,  
Who had a magic to restore the dead  
And make them rise. Are you—

Christopher

King Alexander!

And did he speak? Was't Greek? What  
said he then?

Faustus

No word. You understand my science ill  
Who think I raise the dead. The dead are  
dead.

They lie who say that Iamblicus once  
wrought

Centurions of Cæsar out of air,  
That battled and were stricken and could  
strike.

The dead are dead;—but metaphysic knows  
How smoke may shine like armor and be  
blown

To features of dead kings. 'Tis so with all  
Man knows or ever shall know to the end.  
Mind shall be king, shall break in through  
the glass

That shows itself, itself; shall analyse  
And test and know and fashion into word  
The thing that Is; but no thought ever shall,  
Until this siderated sphere be burst

Into a million twinklings, build new thing,  
Nor call up life or beauty from the void,  
Nor make the dead whose flesh is dead, alive.

Fritz

I wallow in old ignorance. But still  
There's miracle in that apparent smoke  
You hold so lightly.

Christopher

Aye, that's miracle  
To make their hair move. Show us but a  
glimpse  
Of that smoke-Alexander, and your name  
Shall ride with Nostradamus' Pleiades  
Down to the end of Time.

Matthiolus

By Heaven, Yes!  
I'll write you in clear latin, with a boss  
Of gold and crimson, on the parchment roll  
Of Wittenberg's immortals. But no smoke  
Of Alexander. 'Twas a tearful king,  
A bulk of griefs.

Christopher

The Apostate Julian  
Declares his soul had entered into flesh  
Before he conquered Persia. He would be  
No better than a lion.

Fritz

Circe then!

We'll have a woman. What's an age-dead  
man?

Old heroes are as thick as water-cress.  
But women, Ah!—the roses that are fallen,  
Stars that are dust, old sorrows and old  
songs!  
What woman?

Matthiolus

Helen of Troy!

All

Helen of Troy!

Come, call her back for us, let us see Helen!

Faustus

Nay, she would be but smoke, a puff of  
smoke,

Smoke and a shadow, woman and no flesh;  
What fool desires a woman that no arms  
May crush the wine of, and no lips find  
sweet?

All

Helen of Troy, Call Helen up, Call Helen!

Matthiolus

Show us that mind can fashion out of air  
The beauty that the flesh surrendered up.

Wagner

Nay master, let these necromancies be,  
These magics out of air, these vaporous  
Appearances of flesh long turned to mould.  
The clock whirs for the hour. Oh make  
your peace  
With heaven, if there still be—

Faustus

Silence thou!

The mind knows no conclusion, finds no end,  
But its own seeking; and my seeking was  
The true entelechy, the living seed,

The root wherefrom this universe is blown  
A golden flower. Shall I stand because  
Time threatens me? Shall I not rather flaunt  
My learning in the face of him and say:

"Here see how I make mock of you, how I  
Have digged this richest treasure from the  
soil

Of old forgotten centuries of time;  
How I, whom you shall conquer, yet strike  
down

Your mystery and set this little brain  
The worms shall spoil, above your awful-  
ness—

And all with science-ashes and a smoke!"?  
Shall mind fear death that knows within itself  
All life and all begetting and all end?

[There is a sound of thunder and the rain  
beats heavily at door and window. Faus-  
tus goes to the hearth. The candles have  
guttered down and are now dead. The  
students lean over the table watching him.  
Suddenly he stands erect, flinging a hand-  
ful of ashes on the fire. The flames sink,  
then rise in a great flare. Helen of Troy  
stands on the hearth. She is naked and

her limbs shine like silver in the light.  
Her hands are at her breast. Faustus  
steps back.]

Matthiolus

'Tis thou! Forgive me!

Christopher

O the wonderful  
Sad eyes, the lips like prayer!

Fritz

Her beauty seems  
As all the tides of ocean ebbing down  
Out of the heart to her.

Faustus

Oh blind! blind! blind!  
Ye eagerly deceived! Ye gladly tricked  
To dull believing! Fools! And I have sold  
My flesh and old rebellious hope of Heaven  
To doubt what you run panting to believe.  
I have forsworn all peace to keep aflame  
The will you quench in faith—the will to try



All life and living in the Alkahest  
Of thought, to set the single mind above  
All seeming, all appearances, to match  
With sense all emptiness, to crumble faith  
Into its ignorance. This blowing smoke,  
This shadow of an age-long vanished girl—  
Ye gape and watch the fuming vapor twist  
And call it miracle. But to the mind  
That knows how light and shadow form and  
    solve  
Into each other 'tis a petty trick  
Of eye on brain, a mimicry of life  
As senseless as the many-seeming clouds.  
Ye blind who live in darkness and believe!  
I wrought the maid to mock you. Now  
    almost  
I weep that you have suffered such content  
When such great light illumines. Mind has  
    torn  
The veil that hangs before the Riddler's lip,  
Has found the riddle answered,—time and  
    space  
And life and very dying has the brain  
Ground to their atoms and their ancient  
    laws;  
And soul, and mystery, and stuff of dream

Are rainbow-winking bubbles in the bowl  
That vanish and are nothing. Lo, this ghost  
That makes a mock of them! This thing of  
    air,  
Smoke-wrought and smoke-enduring! Such  
    as she,  
Appearances and shadows, are all things  
That flesh may not acknowledge,—yet the  
    mind  
Has conquered even these, has found them  
    vain,  
A nothingness, an emptiness, a smoke.

[A great gust of wind shakes the house.]

Faustus [turning toward the door]

I fear you not; I've held the globing world  
Of wisdom in my hand. There is no space  
Of all the universe I have not won;  
No door is closed—shall I then grudge the  
    coin  
That pays for this, or hoard the penny when  
The ribbon's bought? It's worth the taste  
    of death  
To know that death is silence, and the dust

Is all and end of our eternity.  
Nay, death has had no hostages of me;  
I hope no morning from him and I fear  
His darkness nothing. It is time. I wait.

[The storm drops suddenly. In the hush  
the fire grows brighter, and the figure of  
Helen suddenly becomes a glow of light.]

Fritz

Look! Lo! She moves—her hands are  
raised—she speaks.

Helen

Yea, I am she whom men call Helen, maid  
Of Troy. Long years the beauty Paris loved  
Has been a stir of corn-flowers by that sea  
Where memory is a tide and summers fade  
Into the past like shadows.

Faustus

'Tis a trick!  
A dream! A phantasy! The dead are dead.  
These are no words! A shadow—

## Helen

I am she

Whose flesh is dust, whose flesh can never  
die;

Helen I am, and yet not Helen, I;  
The maid that was, the proud bewildered girl  
A world made battle for,—she only sought  
Long silence, long forgetfulness of wars,  
And burning moon-fire, and the nightingales.  
But even dead ye troubled me, ye brought  
The wide flare of your searching through the  
stars

To harry me, my name was driven leaf  
In winds of your great longing, I became  
All songs that all men sang me, all faint  
dreams

That sought back into time for me, all grief  
Of hearts but half-forgetting,—I am these.  
I am the pain of young men memorous  
Of beauty that they never knew, and loss  
They never suffered. I am love that flames  
Sometimes at twilight when forlorn sweet  
names

Of beautiful dead women make a tune  
Like lost Sirenicas. I am the fire  
Your passion builded, shadow of your hearts,

A fallen leaf of dusk the riding moon  
Of your adoring shakes upon the grass.  
Lo! I am she ye seek in every maid  
Ye love and leave again. I am desire  
Of woman that no man may slake in woman.  
This thing am I,—a rose the world has  
dreamed.

[She vanishes.]

[There is a long silence. Far off the storm  
moans again. In the darkness comes the  
voice of Faustus.]

Faustus

‘A rose the world has dreamed’;—and I, I  
stood  
Peak-high in those grey mountains of my  
mind  
And saw all truth, all science, all the laws  
Spread out beneath my feet. I sold all things  
To know that all I knew was all the world  
Of knowledge; and I bought—why, nothing  
then,—  
Or only this at last—a space to know  
That out beyond my farthest reach of  
thought  
All knowledge shines—a radiance of stars.

## ECHO

When in the winter of heart's desire  
Sirens are dead, and the songs of fey  
Jangled and flat on a musty lyre,  
What shall we call to-day?

Miracle wrought from a laugh, a kiss,  
Mystery, wonder and breath of May,—  
How shall our hearts remember this  
When it is yesterday?

## GRIEF

Hadst thou been queen in Babylon,  
My queen who lies so still,  
A proud tumultuous pyre had shone  
Upon thy burial hill.

And gold and pearl and amethyst,  
Thy crown, thy gilded lyre,  
Thy very slaves had kept thee tryst  
In that high flaming fire.

And there had flung an ancient dirge  
Against the burnished sky,  
Like ocean threnodies that surge  
And swell and swooning die.

But Love has crucified Death's fears,  
The grave has set thee free,  
And all the sweetness of slow tears  
Is turned to mockery.

O white Lord Christ, Thy love's caress,  
Thy prophecy that saith  
These dead shall wake from weariness,  
Shames all who mourn for death;

And faith in immortality,  
Affrighted blind belief  
That troubles death's reality,  
Has crushed dim fragrant grief.

Nay, I were mad to weep for thee,—  
But oh thy silken hair!  
And oh the twilight memory,  
The darkening despair!

See then, it is not thee I weep,  
It is not thou art dead.  
Thy lidded eyes are but asleep,  
And weary thy dear head;

I weep the silver dreams we wrought,  
Long years, long years ago;  
I weep the sun-drowsed days that caught  
Our dreams in their sweet flow.

### AN ETERNITY

There is no dusk to be,  
There is no dawn that was,  
Only there's now, and now,  
And the wind in the grass.

Days I remember of  
Now in my heart, are now;  
Days that I dream will bloom  
White the peach bough.

Dying shall never be  
Now in the windy grass;  
Now under shaken leaves  
Death never was.



## ESCAPE

Ships that down the long seas blow,  
Gulls that slope the winter stars,  
Ye that earth's wide highways know,  
Gleam of white wings, gloom of spars,

Ye that follow shattered suns,  
Ye that seek the smouldering day,  
Lead me where the long road runs,  
Lead me your desired way.

Through the intricate dim mind  
Seek I after splendid things,  
Never hearing where, behind  
Pulse of brain, the high soul sings.

Toward the mirror of myself,  
Down the ways my own feet trace,  
Seek I the eternal God,  
Find I there—the seeker's face.

Teach me utterly to leave  
This blind dream within a dream,  
Where the mole-like senses weave  
Out of their deep night a gleam;

Lead me where the bitter sea  
Stings unseeing eyes with sight,  
Mocks the heart's uncertainty  
With itself, stern infinite,

Numbs the brain that comprehends  
Neither end nor endlessness,—  
Save the solemn flesh that tends  
Solemnly its vineyard press;

Where the present hand of God  
Gleams across the tempest, where  
Naked I may feel His rod,  
Pray, unfettered then with prayer.

Ye that follow shattered suns,  
Ye that seek the ash of days,  
Lead me where the long road runs,  
Lead me your desired ways.

## THE CIRCLE

Beauty like storms driven  
 Where my soul is caught,  
 Peace like sorrow shriven  
 Where my peace is wrought,  
 Still I know thee riven  
 Chained in me, low-brought,  
 Wind that shakes my heaven,  
 Rhythm of my thought.

## MY BODY AND I

My body and I, we rested  
 Under a thorn one noon,  
 We talked of days long wested  
 And nights in the moon.

My body lay in shadow,  
 Face in the grass, and said,  
 "What thorn in what deep meadow  
 Will blow when I'm dead?  
 And how will you taste blueberries  
 Bobbing in stolen milk,  
 Or hear Baron Thrush to the cherries,  
 Or touch spider silk?"

How, when no flesh makes you weary,  
How will you find your rest,  
Heels to the logs and brown sherry,  
When body is dust?

There'll be no sleep nor forgetting,  
For I was lid to your eyes,  
I was dusk and sunsetting,  
I the moonrise.

There'll be no lying in flowers  
Adoring the white moon's face,  
For I was time and the hours,  
Distance and space.

Spirit you, I was earthen,  
But color and fragrance are  
A dust and a faint wind's burthen,  
And dust is the star.

You are the sun unshaded—  
But I was mist on the dawn,  
Half-lights, shadows that faded,  
Glooms that were gone.

Where then, where will you wander  
When body's crumbled and dead?"  
I'll lie long summers under  
And dream you again, I said.

# THE BUGLES PASS

Who's for the war!  
 Who more  
 Makes end of doubting!

Who'll wake  
 Now trumpets shake  
 The earth with shouting!

I know  
 Where dips a way  
 Has merry ending;

There go  
 The young and gay  
 That sing descending.

I know  
 Where climbs a road  
 Into to-morrow;

There go  
 The seed of God  
 Toward the furrow;

I know  
Where shines the sun  
On windy spaces,

Where low  
The shadows run,  
The swallow races;

---

But Oh!  
When youth is gone  
The glory passes.

“TO LUCASTA, ON GOING TO  
THE WARS”

Now has all time culminated  
In this pulse of dizzy blood;  
Now eternity is mated  
In this swift suspended flood  
Of the sense that sings, *Forever*  
*Does this perfect Now abide,*  
And the brain that echoes, *Never,*  
*Never, never turns again this tide.*

Oh, the desperate dumb clinging  
Of the unbelieving hands!  
Oh, the nerves grown dull with flinging  
Up the mind's o'er-written sands  
All the fleetingness of wonder,  
All the moment's cresting foam,  
That withdrawing leaves thereunder  
Vanishing, dim legends where it clomb.

Unforgotten, unremembered  
Shall thy beauty haunt the brain  
Like old magic cities embered  
Where the golden sunsets wane;—

Ah, my love let be to-morrow!  
All to-morrow is is now,  
All we'd lose and all we'd borrow;—  
Laugh, and prove all time more brief than  
thou.

## THE EASTER OF SWORDS

(April 8, 1917)

Now out of this corruption has been born  
This incorruption. Out of this decay,  
This passionless, sick serving of the day,  
This staleness—from this seed, this rotten  
    corn  
Of shame and doubt, has sprung this flowered  
    thorn,  
This burgeoned pain, this fire. We that were  
    clay  
Have lifted up our eyes,—and lo! the spray  
Of bright swords and the challenging high  
    horn!

So Christ is risen, so the wakened soul  
Has lifted back the heavy stone and stands  
Aflame with morning; what then if it be  
Death, not the lily, shining in his hands?  
Already, ere the first reveilles roll,  
*Our death is swallowed up in victory.*



## SONNET

(The Parting of the Ways)

We had each other's youth; the halcyon  
At wrist, Hymettos but a sunny sail  
Beyond each morning's morrow, and the gale  
Set westward. Oh, we had the towering sun,  
The lift of the year, flood tide,—all things  
    begun,  
None ended, none attained; even to fail  
Was tart grape under tongue, and life a tale  
That should have pause for reveries anon.

We had each other's youth; why then what's  
    lost  
If we who one time, 'top of happy hours,  
Found each the other and himself found most,  
Finding how self in all selves blows and  
    flowers—  
If we who were one seeking and one ghost,  
Losing each other, find what loss is ours?

## MORITURI

Not as Ulysses, overwise with age,  
Shall we sail out beyond the westward gate  
Into the unknown seas. Not destinate,  
And weary of man's seeking, and the mage  
Of subtle-changing earth and that vast sky  
Where wonder walks, shall we sail curious  
To do the last adventure. Oh, not thus,  
Not satisfied with living, shall we die.

But we shall meet death running, with our  
    lips  
Still glad of the morning; and with widening  
    eyes  
Still thirsty for the light, we shall surprise  
The secret under that old hooded Fear,  
And touch that face with eager finger-tips,  
And find but Change, who crowns with youth  
    the year.

## THE COST OF WAR

Oh, not the loss of the accomplished thing!  
Not dumb farewells, nor long relinquishment  
Of beauty had, and golden summer spent,  
And savage glory of the fluttering  
Torn banners of the rain, and frosty ring  
Of moon-white winters, and the imminent  
Long-lunging seas, and glowing shoulders  
    bent  
To race on some smooth beach the sea-gull's  
    wing:

Not these, nor all we've been, nor all we've  
    loved,  
The pitiful familiar names, had moved  
Our hearts to weep for them; but oh, the star  
The future is! Eternity's too wan  
To give again that undefeated, far,  
All-possible irradiance of dawn.

## THE SHOWMAN

(A Portrait)

A golden wind came running down the grass  
And in and out the sun and shadow went  
The stir of blowing dresses and the tint  
Of scarf and leaf and laughter—ay, it was  
The scene for her; she sat, self-mimicking,  
The center of her central-whirling world,  
And tuned her mood to mockery, and skirled  
A showman's lilting flourish on the string.

Her words were swift as swallows in a  
gale—  
Darted and flashed and poised, and then in  
flight  
Essayed the Heavens, and then were vanished  
quite  
In some perplexing Orcus—ran the scale  
Of mirth from platypod to the eternal  
sprite—  
But never left the wares she had for sale.

## AN ANTIQUE SHOP

Her chair now, see how curious the line  
Of dragons down the old mahogany  
And that daguerreotype—you almost see  
How red her cheeks and how her earrings  
shine.

And that's her lustre crock for cherry wine,  
And that—ah, that frail web of filigree—  
Grandmother's wedding night-cap, worn  
when she  
First slept in that old bed you thought so fine.

Ah, little bride, when you and I are fled  
Beyond the farthest echo of to-day,  
And all our hearts immortalized is dead,  
And all our love dreamed amaranth is grey—  
Think you a broken net of silver thread  
Could mark the world how joyous was life's  
May?

## THE SILENCE

A song between two silences Life sings,  
A melody 'twixt night and patient night.  
He strums his lute against the fading light  
To gild the shadow that the gloaming brings,  
And Love is but a plucking of the strings,  
A throb of music staying music's flight,  
A little note that hardly shall requite  
Thine outstretched hand that mars Life's  
lute-playings.

Yet, when the last faint echo of that note  
Has stirred the cypress-leaves at eventide,  
When night has stilled forever Life's white  
throat,  
And his gold lute lies shattered by his side,  
We two shall follow through a world remote  
The silence whereinto Love's music died.

## MARIA MEA

What more was She, whom men these thou-  
sand years  
Have loved and sung and revered and  
prayed,  
Than thou to me, deep-hearted little maid?  
She cradled Godhead in Her arms, Her tears  
Were for a visioned cross, a nation's jeers;  
Her joy, the helpless hands of God that  
strayed  
About Her throat, the lullaby She played  
An angel's song, a music of the spheres.

But thou with patient faith in things unseen,  
Reliance on the beautiful, blind trust  
In love's eternity of life, dost screen  
My heart from my own heart's most bitter  
thrust,  
Making my love, late stained with this  
world's dust,  
Thy happiness, thy glory, and thy teen.

## IMAGERY

The tremulously mirrored clouds lie deep,  
Enchanted towers bosomed in the stream,  
And blossomed coronals of white-thorn  
gleam

Within the water where the willows sleep—  
Still-imaged willow-leaves whose shadows  
steep

The far-reflected sky in dark of dream;  
And glimpsed therein the sun-winged  
swallows seem

As fleeting memories to those who weep.

So mirrored in thy heart are all desires,  
Eternal longings, Youth's inheritance,  
All hopes that token immortality,  
All griefs whereto immortal grief aspires.  
Aweary of a world's reality,  
I dream above the imaged pool, Romance.



## IMMORTALITY

## I

As it hath been, it shall be evermore.  
The shadow of the dawning future creeps  
Across the drowsy dial-face, and sweeps  
The graven numbers marked and told before  
By old forgotten hours. So ever o'er  
The paths of yesterday to-morrow keeps  
A slow insistent course, and evening reaps  
Eternity on every sunset shore.

From slumber into slumber all things go;  
Our yesterday is dawned from infinite  
Oblivion; to-morrow's fading light  
Shall darken to that misted morn, and lo!  
No terror clothes the oblivion we know.  
Breathe deep the gloaming of death's second  
night.

## IMMORTALITY

## II

Since Golgotha the learned doctors prate  
Of peace and easeful immortality,  
As if strange fruit of that accursed tree  
Had bloomed and withered but to dissipate  
Old fears, and that a glutton world might sate  
Eternal longings with eternity—  
A world content the cross of Christ should be  
Its suffering and death impersonate.

Ah, Lord, wouldst Thou we let Thy blood  
redeem,  
Thy torture comfort, and Thy sorrow save?  
Or, restless, labor with the soul God gave,  
Aspire and suffer, follow beauty's gleam,  
Endure the barren agony of dream,  
And win brief life—not freedom from the  
grave?

## IMMORTALITY

## III

Nay, I have lived before, and elsewhere  
Have lolled against the breast of God's  
Unseen,  
And watched Infinities of Things careen  
With shouted laughter down the startled air,  
And caught the Truth by his entangled hair,  
And plucked at Beauty's burnished wing to  
preen  
A broken feather from its golden sheen,  
And smiled with Love, slow walking, white  
in vair.

How else—when you come running to sur-  
prise  
My heart with sudden arms about my throat,  
And laugh with such a wishful little note—  
How else am I, Love's acolyte, so wise  
To know that dreams and passion turned  
devote,  
And joy grown sad, are Love with wide  
girl's eyes?

## THE ALTAR

I built an unnamed altar in my heart,  
And sculptured sacred garlands for a frieze  
From delicately petalled memories,—  
The fragrance of a word, the fragile art  
Of ash-gold hair, dim visioned things that  
start

With radiant wings from mist of reveries,  
And vanish at the telling as a breeze  
Blurs mirrored stars in dark pools set apart.

But, as I worshipped reverently there  
The symbols of the beautiful, there came  
A light aslant the shadows of my prayer  
That silenced mine uplifted lips with shame.  
The garlands coldly carven in that fair  
Unmeaning tracery enscrolled—thy name.

## DUSK

Think not I may not know thee kneeling  
there,

For all I lie so silently in death;  
Ay, ever as the candle flickereth,  
I watch the light weave shadow in thy hair,  
I see thy white hands eloquent in prayer,  
I hear the agony of sobbing breath;  
And words of faith thy sorrow whispereth  
Upon thy lips are echoes of despair.

I hear—and wonder how one time we played  
At this; called Death's reflection to Love's  
glass,

And blurred the image with a laugh, afraid.  
Now Death is come and gone, the solemn  
mass

Low sung, the mirror shattered; fancies pass,  
And heart in heart we weep Love's body laid.

## A LIBRARY OF LAW

Adjudicated quarrels of mankind,  
Brown row on row!—how well these lawyers  
bind  
Their records of dead sin,—as if they feared  
The hate might spill and their long shelves be  
smeared  
With slime of human souls,—brown row on  
row  
Span on Philistine span, a greasy show  
Of lust and lies and cruelty, dried grime  
Streaked from the finger of the beggar, Time.

I wonder if the little letters there,  
Black-stamped and damned eternally to bear  
The records of old sin, must never long  
For that fair printed world of ancient song,  
Where, line on martial line, they stretch  
across  
The vellum's edge to some irradiant boss  
Of scarlet lettering, where sits a quaint  
Gilt-featured and attenuated saint,

That world where they grow volatile and  
fling

A spray of golden butterflies a-wing  
Up through the blue infinities of dream  
To brush God's feet, and flutter, wings  
a-gleam,

About the veinless marble of His chair,  
And make a sudden splendor through His  
hair;

That world where they drift ghostly down  
the dusk

Of old forgotten twilights, toss the musk  
Of primroses against his face who reads,  
Make prayers from the clicking of old beads,  
Blow long dead summers through the naked  
trees

Leaf after leaf, call back faint memories  
Of lips that once were sweet, and eyes once  
glad,

And little hands that set the spirit mad  
With plucking of invisible lute strings,—  
All, all the vanished magic of dead things.

## A SAMPLER

She stitches quaint embroideries  
My lady of white hands,  
With fishes from the China seas  
And beasts from foreign lands.

And flowers out of Araby  
And sage Saharan ants,  
And cockatoos from Nickerie  
And wrinkled elephants,

And ships with swelling purple sails  
And cargoes pavonine,  
And whalermen and spouting whales,  
And porpoises in line.

And cows of rich autumnal hues  
A-browse in flowered meads,  
And shepherd dogs in buffs and blues  
And shepherd boys in tweeds.

She weaves them all into a net,  
And, silk for Circe's wine,  
Enchants them there with mignonette  
In intricate design.



And thence methinks she has that art  
Whereby her fingers twist  
Into the dull web of my heart  
Silver and amethyst.

## BALLADE

"A pilgrim cowed in light is love,  
Who kneels at many shrines and prays."  
So sang I knowing naught thereof.  
"He kneels beside the thronging ways  
And ever in the dust he lays  
His reverent soul at Mary's feet  
Beneath her all-caressing gaze.  
For only dreams of love are sweet."

"And lo, a pagan god is love,  
His shining head bound round with bays."  
So sang I knowing nought thereof.  
"He breathes the breath of burning Mays  
Plucking from Autumn's lap of days  
Gold fruits of life to crush and eat,  
Yet lustful are his lips always,  
For only dreams of love are sweet."

But last I learned the truth of love,  
That carnal love the world obeys.  
'Tis but a web which Gaea wove  
With warp of pain and weft of days,  
Where vast, insensate, o'er the haze  
Of mortal dreams she has her seat,—  
A web to catch whom soon she slays.  
For only dreams of love are sweet.

## ENVOY

How fairer than the garnered maize  
The shadows in the windy wheat,  
And throstle notes than roundelays.  
For only dreams of love are sweet.

## THE 'CHANTRESS

Lo, the lady Margaret!  
Cunningly her fingers fret  
    Witcheries in clay.  
She is Circe, sorceress  
Mulberries make red her press,  
Moon-ripe poppy blooms confess  
    Her way.

Lo, the lady Margaret  
Spreadeth beauty for a net,  
    Springeth souls thereby,  
Springeth souls to light her clay,  
This for laughter, this to pray,  
This to dance the Spring away,  
    And die.

Lo, the lady Margaret!  
Her dark hair is springes set,  
    Her two hands a spell.  
Whom she tangleth, him they bind,  
Ariel in oak-tree rind,  
In the dark clay, dumb and blind,  
    To dwell!

Lo, the lady Margaret!  
All her dryad folk forget,  
    Bubbles in the bowl—  
April and the running seas,  
Stars and rainbows, what are these?—  
So her clay have foam and lees  
    Of soul.

## A SONG FOR THE HARP

Iseult, Iseult of Ireland,  
The years are born again,  
Again Tintagel's towers stand,  
And blows the corn again,  
The russet corn again.

Again, again the shoreward waves  
Make wondrous undertone,  
That whispers down the forest naves  
When melody is flown,  
When twilight birds are flown.

Iseult, Iseult, remember thou  
How soft the music swept—  
Nay till the lily moon arow  
I'll dream that time has slept,  
All flower-like has slept.

So softly was the harping wrought  
As in the web of sound  
The wings of melody were caught,  
And fluttering music bound,  
And moth-winged music bound.

Iseult, Iseult, when night is drawn  
I'll cross the Irish sea,  
And in the moon's white fragrant dawn  
Steal down the dusk to thee,  
Across the years to thee.

Iseult, my queen, all loves that were  
Born on a kiss and killed,  
Resurgent with the surging year,  
Are in the heart fulfilled,  
The secret heart fulfilled.

Forget? Nay thou can'st not forget  
Nor peaceful close thine eyes.  
Upon thy rose the thorn regret  
Shall scar with memories,  
Scar peace with memories.

## CERTAIN POETS

Oh, words and words and words,—a twitter-  
ing blur

Of sparrow wings that puff up from the rye  
When something hidden stirs there; up they  
fly

A wheeling, huddled, undecided whir,  
And what it was aroused them, Pan or cur,  
Appears not,—save that 'twas a prodigy,  
A portent sure, and, with its passing by,  
A new world dawned, and grubs and rye-  
fields were.

And so their verses go,—a clamorous puff  
Of words unformed, unbeautiful, distraught,  
That eddy in the mood like feathered stuff,  
And underneath the sound of them a thought,  
Of something hidden stirring,—like enough  
Apocalypse or naughtiness—or naught.

A portent then! a dumb and groping urge  
Of something blind like voices in a mist;  
'Lord, but it 'wilders one! To feel it twist  
Old earth with iron, mutter in the forge,

Threaten in smoke;—why, look you, we're  
a-verge  
Of worlds undreamt, and every silly fist  
That curses God's a sign! There's wondrous  
grist  
A-grinding, wondrous new-sown corn  
a-surge.'

New worlds! These things were seedling in  
dead Cain.

But you, for you old magics yet remain  
Of restless whispering winds that press along  
Dim casements of the sense-enshuttered  
brain.

Beauty has called you, and the worlds that  
wane

From crescent into crescent of thin song.

## A SONG

Youth is old before his time,  
Hélas! Heighho!  
Watcheth where the white stars climb,  
Readeth windy wheat to rhyme,  
Danceth to no tune, no chime,  
Heighho!

Youth is drear before his days,  
Hélas! Heighho!  
Weepeth where the cypress sways,  
Chanteth Grief a doleful praise,  
Danceth to no roundelays,  
Heighho!

Youth is done with lovely Life,  
Hélas! Heighho!  
Putteth Lady Hope to knife,  
Taketh Mistress Worm to wife,  
Hath no joyous Hippogrife,  
Hélas!  
Danceth to no merry fife,  
Heighho!



## LILIES

Lily, red wood lily,  
Flaunting fairy lily,  
Lily springing where the heel  
Was down-impressed of Pan;  
Lily at whose throat the moon  
Flutters like a moth a-swoon—  
Round and round thy shining reel  
Deft-foot things of Pan.

Lily, Pan's red lily,  
Sunlight-drunken lily,  
Golden, golden lily tipped  
With dawn's drowned fire;  
Lily, burning lily,  
Mad and mad and shrilly  
Trip the hooves where Pan has tripped,  
Gleam the flanks mad Pan has nipped,  
Gyre, gyre, gyre,  
Mad and mad and shrilly,  
Pipes go never stilly,  
Hooves make eager rhythm where  
The song is thee,

Shrilly, shrilly, shrilly,  
Flare and flute note trilly,  
Hearken, hearken, hearken there,  
Shadows dance and darken there,  
Hand and hoof and haunches bare  
Encircle thee.

O lily, red wood lily,  
Flaunting fairy lily,  
Never stop the piping of the Pan god's  
tune:—

“Life's a music hath no word,  
Death's a lute no hand has stirred,  
Eternity's a rondeau in an old, old rune.”  
Never stop their piping there,  
Never yield them—never spare,  
Lest thou dream Christ's lily fair—  
More fair than thou.

## CHARITY

Since my Beloved chambered me  
    To beat within her breast,  
And took my soul to light a shrine  
    Her soul had decked and dressed,  
And caught my songs about her throat,—  
    Dissected, known, confessed,  
I dwell within her charity  
    A half-unwelcome guest.

## TO MY SON

You are her laughter  
    Blown to a rose,  
Singing heard after  
    The song's at the close.

You are the sorrow  
    Was dusk in her eyes,  
You are the morrow  
    Is night where she lies.

## SOUL-SIGHT

Like moon-dark, like brown water you  
escape,  
O laughing mouth, O sweet uplifted lips.  
Within the peering brain old ghosts take  
shape;  
You flame and wither as the white foam  
slips  
Back from the broken wave: sometimes a  
start,  
A gesture of the hands, a way you own  
Of bending that smooth head above your  
heart,—  
Then these are vanished, then the dream is  
gone.

Oh, you are too much mine and flesh of me  
To seal upon the brain, who in the blood  
Are so intense a pulse, so swift a flood  
Of beauty, such unceasing instancey.  
Dear unimagined brow, unvisioned face,  
All beauty has become your dwelling place.

## JASON

I lay where stain of poppies crept  
    Across a summer hill,  
And drowsy droning grasses slept  
With heavy heads, and wild bees kept  
    Their slumbrous music still.

I lay and let my lazy dreams  
    Drift with the idle breeze  
Like leaves that float on autumn streams,  
Gilded as fairy quinquereemes,  
    Down to their magic seas.

I dreamed,—and all the fragrant earth  
    Was as a sailing cloud.  
From tears and sorrows, for my mirth  
I wove a rainbow mist, and birth  
    I folded in death's shroud.

I dreamed, but ever from the vale  
    Beneath the sun-drowsed hills,  
There rose the pulsing of the flail,  
The hiss of scythes, the mower's hail,  
    The hum of water mills:

And through the voices of the fields  
A sweeter voice that said,  
"It is the coward heart that yields  
To dreams its heritage, nor wields  
A sword unscabbarded."

Ah, voice that singeth bravely there,  
Dost think that dreams are peace?  
Dost think it cowardice to dare  
Eternity of blind despair  
For gold of fairy fleece?

## THE HILLS OF CLEEVE

I heard the fairies keening on the uplands  
yestereve  
When scarce the vagrant grey of dusk was  
done,  
When sheep were calling darkly down the  
shadow hills of Cleeve  
And far below the village candles shone.

I heard the hare-bells knelling in the wet  
wind off the wold,  
I heard the clouds go creeping down the hill,  
I heard the dew soft falling from the last  
long rifts of gold,  
I heard how singingly the stars were still.

I heard the fairies keening on the uplands all  
night long,  
A-weeping soft and sadly for their queen;  
"She's vanished like the echo of her own  
forlorn sweet song,  
She's turned our twilight dance to twilight  
teen.

“Oh, dreams are only dim desires, and songs  
are only tunes,  
The flowers deck the graves of other years,  
The Springs are fleeting children of a thousand  
fleeting Junes,  
And only old and endless are our tears.”

## INDIAN SUMMERS

(1)

The Day of Falling Leaves  
When gold October reaves  
The May's  
Lost Roundelays,

When Autumn stoops to list  
The wind, mad organist,  
Pipe tunes  
Of dancing Junes,

And Autumn's butterflies  
Drift earthward, petal-wise,  
A-swing  
On perilous wing,—



(2)

So, in our passion's death,  
When knowledge whispereth  
    With wise  
Unholy eyes,

And thy sweet flowered mouth  
Is grey with Autumn's drouth  
    And love  
Dreams not thereof,

Our Day of Falling Leaves  
Calls back the Spring, deceives  
    The sense  
With transience.

## THE REED-PLAYER

(After Macleod)

A hollow reed against his lips  
    He played a soaring strain,  
That fled his dancing finger tips  
Light as a swallow wheels and dips  
    Above the flowing grain.

The Song of Songs it was, strange wrought  
Beyond the heather hills  
From memories and dreams, and taught  
By shepherd women who had caught  
Its lilt from mountain rills.

The beating of a heart I heard  
In that forlorn sweet air,  
The singing of a distant bird,  
A sigh, a softly uttered word  
And echoed laughter there.

"Play me a song of Death," I whispered then.  
He raised his hollow reed as one who longs  
To turn to dreams, and smiled, and played  
again  
The Song of Songs.

## BACCALAUREATE

A year or two, and grey Euripides,  
And Horace and a Lydia or so,  
And Euclid and the brush of Angelo,  
Darwin on man, Vergilius on bees,  
The nose and dialogues of Socrates,  
Don Quixote, Hudibras and Trinculo,  
w worlds are spawned and where the dead  
    gods go,—  
All shall be shard of broken memories.

And there shall linger other, magic things,—  
The fog that creeps in wanly from the sea,  
The rotten harbor smell, the mystery  
Of moonlit elms, the flash of pigeon wings,  
The sunny Green, the old-world peace that  
    clings  
About the college yard, where endlessly  
The dead go up and down. These things  
    shall be  
Enchantment of our hearts' rememberings.

And these are more than memories of youth  
Which earth's four winds of pain shall blow  
away;

These are youth's symbols of eternal truth,  
Symbols of dream and imagery and flame,  
Symbols of those same verities that play  
Bright through the crumbling gold of a great  
name.

## REALITIES

### I

The people of the earth go down,  
Each with his wealth of dream,  
To barter in the market town  
A star for a torch's gleam;  
To barter hope for certitude,  
And mysteries of love  
For passion's little interlude;  
And joy for the laugh thereof.

They sell their treasures of dreams  
For dream's realities,  
Their wealth of fairy quinquereemes  
For ships of salter seas,

Their gods for shapes of tortured stone,  
 Their faith for shrines that fall,  
 The unknown for the touched and known,  
 Life at the living's call.

They barter songs for the throat that sings,  
 Frail dawns for drowsing days,  
 Eternal moods for brittle Things,  
 Thrush notes for roundelays,  
 The flame of thorn and eglantine  
 For fallow labored lands,  
 Tall lilies touched of Proserpine  
 For lilies of fair hands.

They buy and pass no more that way;  
 Their eyes forget the star,  
 Forget the mysteries of May,  
 Forget the dim and far.  
 They build them tower and high wall  
 To bolt against the spring,  
 To shutter out the mavis' call,  
 And heart's remembering.

## II

But Time, a taper guttering,  
 Drops in a slow decay.

And Youth, a white moth fluttering,  
Blows with the wind away;  
And walls and towers made of hands,  
And faith, and roundelay,  
And laughter, and red fallow lands,  
Pass like the withered spray.

And certitude grows rank with ease,  
And idols turn to mold,  
And passion's cup holds bitter lees,  
And pale, soft hands grow cold;  
All shimmering reality,  
The world that shines and seems,  
The earth, the mountains and the sea,  
Are shadows of old dreams.

### III

Yet when the splendor of the earth  
Is fallen into dust,  
When plow and sword and fame and worth  
Are rotted with black rust,  
The Dream, still deathless, still unborn,  
Blows in the hearts of men,  
The star, the mystery, the morn,  
Bloom agelessly again.

Older than Time with ages shod,  
The matins of a thrush,  
Deeper than reverence of God,  
The summer evening's hush.  
Than trampling death is grief more strong,  
Love than its avatars,  
And echo of an echoed song  
Shall shake the eternal stars.















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